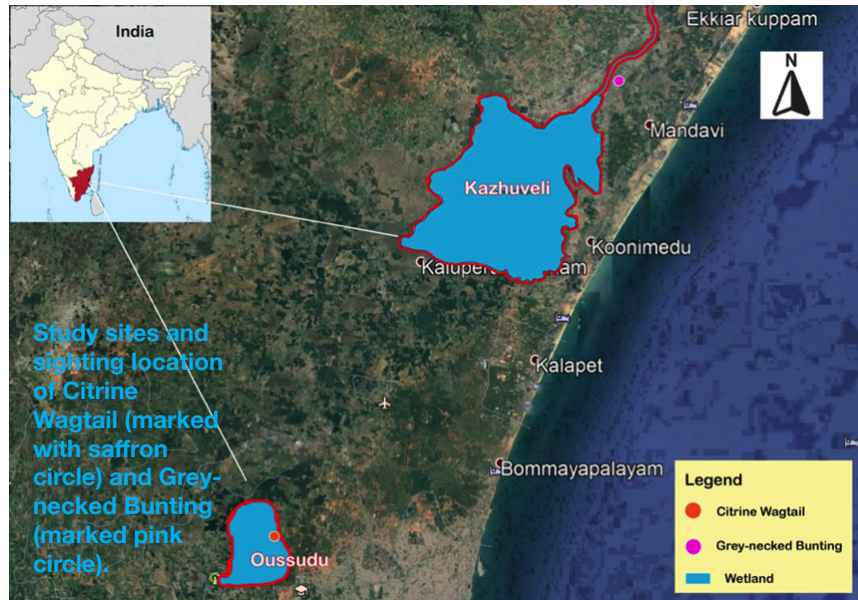


First photographic record of Grey-necked Bunting and Citrine Wagtail in coastal wetlands of Kazhuvveli and Oussudu, India

Kazhuvveli and Oussudu are important seasonal wetlands of Tamil Nadu and Puducherry and nearly 40,000 migratory and resident birds visit these wetlands during the peak winter season (Balachandran & Alagarajan 1995; Davidar 2011). Kazhuvveli is a semi-permanent, fresh to brackish water lake that falls between 12.083° N and 79.800° E, whereas the Oussudu Lake is a freshwater lake situated at 11.950° N to 79.7666° E. The extensive reed beds, mudflats, open water area, groves of thorny scrub, *Acacia nilotica* and *Prosopis juliflora*, and other floating hydrophytes in these wetlands provide a good foraging and roosting site for many resident and migratory birds (Davidar 2011; Rahmani et al. 2016). Kazhuvveli and Oussudu have been listed as Important Bird Area (IBA) for India hosting several threatened birds, namely, Greater Spotted



Grey-necked Bunting recorded in Kazhuvveli Wetland.
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A male Citrine Wagtail foraging on grass batches of Oussudu Wetland. © Bubesh Guptha, M.

Eagle, Painted Stork, Spot-billed Pelican, Oriental Darter, Black-headed Ibis, and Lesser Flamingo (Islam & Rahmani 2006; Davidar 2011; Rahmani et al. 2016).

As a part of our regular bird survey in Kazhuveli Lake, on 11 December 2020, at 1330 h, while watching a flock of roosting Spot-billed Pelicans on an *Acacia* tree, we sighted a bird that had a distinctive white eye-ring, which stood out in contrast to the grey hood. The chin and throat of the bird were whitish-pink and bordered by grey stripes with pinkish-brown underparts. We were astonished to identify it as the Grey-necked Bunting and before the bird took off from the roost tree, the first author managed to get a picture using his camera (Canon 6D Mark II with 150–600 mm Tamron Tele lens). A perusal through available records of the Grey-necked Bunting's occurrence in Puducherry and Tamil Nadu regions showed that the bird was sighted for the

first time in Kazhuveli Wetlands (Table 1).

Grey-necked Bunting is a Least Concern bird species flying from the Caspian Sea to the Altai Mountains in central Asia. It winters in parts of Africa, western Asia, and parts of southern Asia as far south as Sri Lanka (Ali & Ripley 1981; BirdLife International 2020a). The natural habitat of this bird is temperate grassland. It is also found in stubbly weeds, dry and open habitats, often stony, and scrubby hillsides.

In another field survey on 02 December 2020, at 1446 h we sighted a bird constantly wagging its tail and preying on insects on the grass batches at the edges of Oussudu Wetland. Surprisingly, we identified it as the Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* as it had bright yellow on the entire head except for the black nape, pale lores, grey back, and wing bars that distinguished it from the Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*. Earlier sightings of this species in Tamil

Nadu and Puducherry regions are given in Table 1. Available records of the Citrine Wagtail's occurrence in Puducherry show that this has been the first photography record in Oussudu Wetland. Citrine Wagtail is a Least Concern bird species; breeds in the central Palearctic in wet meadows and tundra. It migrates in winter to southern Asia, often to highland areas. Its range is expanding westwards, and it is a rare but increasing vagrant to western Europe. The Citrine Wagtail has been

recorded as an extremely rare passer-by rather than staying even for a few days or weeks (Ali & Ripley 1981; Inskipp et al. 2000; BirdLife International 2020b). It is an insectivorous bird associated with marshland and grassy jheels and some of them often seen on floating lotus leaves and vegetation in a tank, tripping along lightly in search of insects. The Kazhuveli Wetland has vast grass cover, which is catering to the needs of many insectivorous birds including Citrine Wagtail.

Table 1. Comparison of the sightings of Grey-necked Bunting and Citrine Wagtail in Tamil Nadu and Puducherry regions.

	Date	Species	Location	Individuals	Sighted by
1	20.i.2017	Grey-necked Bunting	Devanoorputhur, Tiruchirappalli district, Tamil Nadu	1	Siva & Neelananarayanan, 2017
2	09.xii. 2018	Grey-necked Bunting	Kannampalyam grasslands, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India	2	Coimbatore Nature Society
3	22.xi.2020	Grey-necked Bunting	Pappampatti Grassland, Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, India	1	Krishnamoorthy Muthirulan
4	11.xii.2020	Grey-necked Bunting	Kazhuveli Wetland, Tamil Nadu, India	1	Present Study
5	21.xii.2013	Citrine Wagtail	Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India	1	Anonymous eBirder
6	07.xi.2016	Citrine Wagtail	Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India	4	Rama Neelamegam
7	04.xii.2016	Citrine Wagtail	T.N. Palayam Lake, Puducherry, India	2	Surendhar Boobalan
8	13.i.2018	Citrine Wagtail	Kannankurichi (Mookaneri) Lake, Salem, Salem, Tamil Nadu, India	2	Venkatraman Rajamanickam
9	28.iii.2018	Citrine Wagtail	Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India	5	Mahathi Narayanaswamy
10	20.x.2018	Citrine Wagtail	Ram Nagar Swamps, Madipakkam, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India	2	Aravind AM
11	08.iii.2019	Citrine Wagtail	Sholinganallur/Perumbakkam Marshlands, Kancheepuram, Tamil Nadu, India	2	Sidharth Srinivasan
12	15.xii.2019	Citrine Wagtail	Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Madras, Chennai, Tamil Nadu, India	14	Mahathi Narayanaswamy
13	02.xii.2020	Citrine Wagtail	Oussudu Wetland, Puducherry & Tamil Nadu, India	1	Present Study

Source: eBird 2020a,b.

As both the species were documented through a single individual sighting, further monitoring and surveillance in and around these wetlands during the winter season is essential to establish whether their occurrence at these wetlands was accidental or regular. Realizing the ecological significance of these wetlands, strict enforcement of legislation along with local people support would not only restore the quality of wetlands, but also its visitors.

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